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New York

President: Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 129 (*continued*)

Seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War

Special solemn meeting of the General Assembly in commemoration of all victims of the Second World War

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 129 and adopted resolution 69/267 at its 80th plenary meeting, on 26 February 2015.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, a conflict that brought untold sorrow to humankind. The anniversary also holds particular importance for the United Nations, whose founding took place on the ashes of that ferocious War, which claimed millions of lives.

The Second World War was a time of unspeakable atrocities, of lost faith and devastated humanity. Today we honour the countless victims who lost their lives in the War. This special meeting also affords us an opportunity to recall the General Assembly's firm desire to make every possible effort to prevent and mitigate the human suffering that results from war. Indeed, we must never forget the international community's responsibility to stand up against tyrants, despots and all who attempt to suppress the enduring nature of the human spirit.

Having survived the catastrophe of the Second World War, humankind sought to embrace new means to prevent the recurrence of such tragic events. To that end the United Nations was established, aimed at ensuring unity and harmony among nations. As envisioned in its Charter, the United Nations was founded to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Over the past seven decades, the War has not only shaped the Organization's mission; its lessons also continue to guide our work around the world. Today we stand in solidarity under the guiding principles on which our Organization was founded, including, among others, non-aggression, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the need to protect human rights.

While the Second World War brought about untold misery and suffering, it was also a time when the world witnessed extraordinary bravery. Through the collective heroic efforts of countless men and women, victory was claimed over tyranny and evil. Today we remember and honour the people who lost their lives in the brutal scourge of the Second World War, and pay tribute to those whose memory we must never forget.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Five years have passed since the General Assembly last met to commemorate the end of the most terrible war in the history of humankind and to honour the memory of its victims (see A/64/PV.85). A great deal has happened in those years, but the grandeur and tragedy of the War's events are unfaded and prompt us to pay tribute to those who prevented the world from drowning in an abyss of hatred and pain, at a cost of countless losses and untold sorrow.

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I would like to begin with some words of welcome and gratitude to the veterans who have once again joined us in this Hall, as they did five years ago. It is they who are the most important participants in all the jubil · celebrations. About 200,000 veterans of the War are still living in Russia and, like their comrades-in-arms from other countries, they deserve our most sincere appreciation and our warmest attention and support.

The Soviet people's long four-year struggle against Nazism contributed decisively to the shared victory of the Allies over Hitler. Three-quarters of the Nazi forces were defeated on the Eastern Front, an epic combat that the whole world followed with unflagging attention and hope. Its major milestones are well known — the battle for Moscow, the Nazis' first significant defeat, and the battle of Stalingrad, which marked a turning point in the War. They were the bloodiest in the history of the world, with the losses on both sides in each totalling considerably more than 2 million people. The battle of Kursk was the largest tank action in history, in which more than 2 million men, 6,000 tanks and close to 5,000 aircraft took part. After it, the outcome of the War was virtually a foregone conclusion.

In March 1944 the Red Army reached the Soviet border, and on 1 November the entire country was liberated. And yet the enemy was still not defeated. The Allied leaders' goal of unconditional surrender was not yet achieved. The Soviet troops were still faced with fighting to liberate the many countries in Europe that had been overrun by the Nazis, and the lives of many Soviet soldiers still had to be sacrificed on the altar of victory. More than 600,000 of them lie in Polish soil, 140,000 in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, almost as many in Hungary, around 70,000 in Romania and 26,000 in Austria. Bloody battles erupted on the outskirts of Berlin. As we know, more than 20 million citizens of the multinational Soviet Union altogether gave their lives for the victory over Nazism.

On 2 May 1945, Sergeant Yegorov and Sergeant Kantaria hoisted the banner of victory over the Reichstag. That victory would not have been possible without the heroism of those who fought in many other battles, large and small; without the courage and fortitude of the defenders and residents of besieged Leningrad; without the heroic struggle of the partisans in the occupied territories; and without the self-sacrifice and labour of those who forged victory on the home front.

When we speak of that victory, we remember the valour of the soldiers of the Allied coalition and the brotherhood in arms and unprecedented cooperation of the Allies. Long before a second front was opened in Europe, convoys began to cross the Arctic, delivering much-needed supplies from Great Britain and the United States of America to the Soviet Union's northern ports. The story of the Normandie-Niemen squadron of the French Air Force is famous. Formed on Soviet territory in 1942, it took part in the battle of Kursk, the Belorussian offensive and in engagements in East Prussia. The memory of those and other heroic examples of our joint struggle lives on. That is why there are streets in Russian cities named after the Arctic convoys and the Normandie-Niemen Regiment, and why Stalingrad has given its name to streets and squares in France, Belgium, Italy and elsewhere. The meeting of Soviet and American troops at the Elbe became a shining symbol of that joint struggle and shared victory. The contribution to the common cause of anti-fascists who found the strength to defend their ideals in the face of mortal danger was especially valuable.

But the War was not confined to Europe. In the fierce struggle in the East, China and a number of other countries suffered huge losses, and the War continued there until September 1945. Nor should we forget the battles that were fought on the African continent. In other words, the whole world was affected by the War. Forty countries saw battle action. Many States that were not directly attacked joined the combat, which was hardly surprising considering how high the stakes were. The Nazis intended not only to expand their living space but to drive the development of all human civilization down their shockingly cruel path.

When we read the Nazis' horrifying documents we see that what was behind them was not mere hatred of other peoples but cold, calculated evil that led naturally to putting their theories of racial superiority into practice. Beginning with discriminatory laws and the sowing of xenophobia, they declared publicly that one of their policy goals was to exterminate entire ethnic groups — Jews, Roma, Slavs. In pursuit of that goal they established an entire network of concentration camps all over Europe in which they applied their unthinkably cruel murderous technologies. The death camp at Auschwitz, liberated by Soviet soldiers, has become a symbol of the evil of Nazism's essential inhumanity. Victory alone, a victory whose seventieth anniversary

is being celebrated right now all over Russia and in many other countries, could end that violent bacchanal.

It would seem clear that the historical significance of the victory over fascism can have no truck with opportunistic politicking. Whatever we think of the political and diplomatic twists and turns at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s, the course of history that followed drew a clear line between the forces of good and evil, between the Allied coalition and the Axis Powers. That line was reinforced in the Charter of the United Nations and the decisions of the Nuremberg tribunal. Those who attempt to justify and even glorify Nazism's collaborators today cannot overturn the incontestable verdict of history. It is no accident that such efforts have been condemned a dozen times in relevant General Assembly resolutions.

In our minds, the end of the Second World War is inextricably tied to the creation of the United Nations, which found itself at the centre of a new system of international relations. The very name "United Nations" appeared during the War, since that was what the countries of the Allied coalition called themselves. Succeeding decades have shown that the system we created is not ideal, but it has been able to keep the world from collapsing into a new global catastrophe, it has given States a platform and the tools for dialogue on an equal footing on our most pressing issues and for settling disputes. It is our duty to treat those gains carefully and responsibly. The price that was paid for them was too high and too much is at stake for future generations.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We are here today to solemnly mark the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the defeat of Nazism. We are gathered to mourn all those men, women and children who, soldiers and civilians alike, lost their lives as victims of the War. We are also gathered in order to never forget the darkest hours of European history, when totalitarianism, despotism, hatred, intolerance, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia led to a global conflagration that brought untold sorrow to humankind for the second time in one generation.

Our aim today is to remember the innocent victims of that War, but also to recall the basic values that guided the creation of our Organization. In that context, we can do no better than to bear in mind the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, by which we agreed

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

At the same time, this is also the right moment to express our deep gratitude to the many millions of men and women from around the globe who gave their lives so that nations in Asia, Africa and Europe could live in peace, security and respect for human rights. Together, the Second World War and the unprecedented crime of the Holocaust not only cost Europe tens of millions of human lives and devastated great parts of the continent; the War also left Europe deeply divided for more than four decades. Europeans had to wait until 1990 for the Charter of Paris for a New Europe to proclaim that "Europe whole and free is calling for a new beginning" and to pay tribute to "the courage of men and women" and "the strength of the will of the peoples" that helped to make that possible.

That message also reverberates in the declaration adopted in April 2003 at the conclusion of the negotiations on the accession to the European Union of 10 countries of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, in which 25 European Union members, old and new, underlined their common wish "to make Europe a continent of democracy, freedom, peace and progress" and their determination

> "to avoid new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union".

Since 1990, that new Europe of democracy, peace and unity of the Charter of Paris has suffered a number of very painful setbacks, but the European Union and

its now 28 member States remain firmly committed to those goals. This anniversary must also serve to remind us of our commitment to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or sovereignty of any State. There is no place for the use of force and coercion to change internationally recognized borders. This anniversary should lead us to redouble our efforts to settle disputes by peaceful means. The European Union and its member States are deeply committed to the core principles outlined in the Charter of the United Nations, which are also enshrined in the fundamental documents of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe.

We need to remember the causes and overcome the legacies of the war and build on the progress made since the end of the Second World War in promoting democratic values, human rights and fundamental freedoms. We pay tribute to all those who fought for liberty and peace. Their example should inspire us to come together, to look forward with hope and to redouble our efforts for peace and understanding. Today, the Members of the United Nations must play this crucial role together.

Mr. Mahmadaminov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's solemn meeting of the General Assembly in commemoration of all the victims of the Second World War.

As a representative of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), I have the honour to read out the statement of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the CSTO — the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan — concerning the seventieth anniversary of the victory of the Second World War.

> "On the eve of the seventieth anniversary of the victory against fascism in the Second World War, from 1941 to 1945, we, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, pay tribute to the tens of millions of our compatriots who died on the front lines of the War, as well as in partisan fighting, bombings, occupation and concentration camps from hunger, cold and blockades. We also pay tribute to the millions of people, including children, who died for this victory.
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> "We remember what was achieved 70 years ago and we underscore that this victory was achieved only through the combined efforts of many people for the sake of freedom and opportunity and for those people to determine their own path and for development. We must recall that war against the ideology of hatred when we seek to neutralize new challenges and threats.
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> "The victory in 1945, fought on behalf of the overall values of all humankind, was reconfirmed with the adoption, on 26 February, on the initiative of our States, of resolution 69/267, entitled 'Seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War'. States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization categorically reject and decisively condemn any attempt to rewrite history or to distort and revise the outcome of the Second World War. We consider it unacceptable to attempt to glorify Nazism or any type of violent nationalism. We also reject any cynical attempts to raise to the ranks of national heroes those who fought against the anti-Hitler coalition during the Second World War or who collaborated with the Nazis. We believe that the countries that defeated fascism need to prevent any recurrence of neo-fascism, chauvinism or other forms of xenophobia, as well as the popularization of radical nationalism, including among young people.
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> "History has shown us the danger of intolerance, discrimination, extremism and hatred on ethnic, racial and religious grounds. We consider unacceptable any retention or introduction of new dividing lines on already closed borders; hotbeds of hatred, tension and confrontation in the world and its division into spheres of influence; as well as interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. States must assume the additional responsibility to prevent any kind of intolerance or discrimination and we, as descendants of the victors, should serve as examples in that regard. We are convinced that the peaceful settlement of conflicts, while observing and complying with the norms of international law and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, is the only way to preserve current and future generations from the scourge of new wars.
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> "In commemoration of the victory, we also note the beginning of the work in Nuremberg of the International Military Tribunal, which was the

legal underpinning of the final breaking of fascism. The Nuremberg trials were aimed at preventing the outbreak of wars, acts of genocide, torture and other atrocities. We call on the international community to respect and defend the principles of international law, which have been developed as an inalienable and essential foundation of the current world order and should not be subject to revision.

"One of the main outcomes of this great victory was the establishment of the United Nations. It is based on the philosophy of multilateralism and the collective way of acting and the formation of reliable mechanisms to ensure international peace. We believe that the Charter of the United Nations remains the basis for the development of international relations. Noting the contribution of the peoples of the world in the fight against Nazism, we call on all countries to honour the memory of the victims of the War. We believe we must support the memory and commemoration of those who were lost in the War.

"In memory of those who died while fighting for the freedom and independence of our peoples and with deep gratitude to the veterans, to whom we are indebted, we are confident that the anniversary of the great victory will become a day to celebrate the victory of peace and harmony."

Mr. Kolga (Estonia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia. We fully align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Today's meeting is about remembering the innocent victims and loss of lives in the Second World War, but also about the basic values that led to the creation of the United Nations. Recalling the past we have to admit, unfortunately, that the personal, psychological, demographic, economic and political implications of the Second World War are felt to this day. We also remain very conscious of the fact that it is not just the two World Wars that have brought untold sorrow to humankind over the past hundred years.

Regrettably, our efforts for peace have too often failed, and many current crises and conflicts remain unresolved. This anniversary must remind us of our commitment to refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or sovereignty of any State. It should also lead us to redouble our efforts to settle disputes by peaceful means. We are deeply committed to the core principles outlined in the United Nations Charter and we firmly believe that there is no place for the use of force or coercion to change internationally recognized borders. The United Nations was created to put an end to a world where might makes right. We — every one of us — should ensure that the dark days of war and injustice that followed from such a world will never ever prevail again.

While sincerely commemorating all the victims of the Second World War and paying solemn tribute to all the women and men from all around the globe who fought for liberty and peace, we know that the War left Europe deeply divided for more than four decades. While we commemorate the end of atrocities arising from the World War, we must also remember that for many European countries — our three countries among them — the end of the Second World War did not bring freedom but continuing oppression and injustice and more crimes against humanity. The Baltic States could not be among the founders of the United Nations, as they had been occupied first by Soviet, then by Nazi, and then again by Soviet troops. For the men of the Baltic States, the Second World War was particularly poignant because they were forcibly recruited into armed forces on both sides of the battle.

At the time of the creation of the United Nations, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were illegally annexed to the Soviet Union and could liberate themselves only decades later. This is our story. It cannot be denied or downplayed to irrelevance, and it definitely cannot be called a rewriting of history. Therefore, while commemorating the victims of this War, we also pay tribute to the tens of thousands of our compatriots who sacrificed their lives in the fight for our independence after the World War had officially ended in Europe. Our thoughts are also with all victims of the Nazi and Soviet occupation regimes who were deported and condemned to die far from their homes.

Remembering that the United Nations was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, we should be inspired by all this and redouble our efforts to achieve peace and understanding in the world.

Ms. Mościcka-Dendys (Poland): Almost 70 years have passed since the end of the Second World War, which was the most terrible, cruel and bloody war in the history of humankind. Poland, my own country, was the first victim of Nazi aggression when, on 1 September 1939, we were invaded by Germany, marking the beginning of the Second World War in Europe. Some 17 days after the German aggression, Soviet troops invaded Poland from the East, and soon afterwards all Polish territory was occupied.

Poland experienced the worst of both Hitler's and Stalin's particular forms of ideological madness. Genocide, politically motivated killings, ethnic cleansing and physical destruction became part of daily life in occupied Poland. Ours was the region where Nazism and Soviet communism started as allies and finally clashed and showed their worst face. In his book about Eastern Europe, Yale historian Timothy Snyder calls it "Bloodlands".

Poland paid a high price during the Second World War. Over 6 million Polish citizens, including 3 million Polish Jews, were killed. For every 1,000 Polish citizens, 220 were lost. We also suffered immense material losses. At least 83 per cent of the main part of our capital city, Warsaw, was in ruins. There was hardly a family that was not tragically affected by the War, and the end of the War did not automatically bring full freedom and independence. Although Polish soldiers were fighting on all fronts in the Second World War, in Norway, France — including the beaches of Normandy — Britain, Italy or North Africa, they did not experience the freedom they hoped to get for their own country. Poland fell under Soviet domination until 1989, when our full sovereignty was finally regained.

Today it is our responsibility to keep the memory of the Second World War alive and draw lessons. We must remember that, as Anne Applebaum once put it, half of Europe was liberated at the cost of enslaving the other for 50 years. What does that teach us? What lessons can we draw for the future? On this Day of Remembrance, we should honour all the victims of the War and remember the enormous tragic suffering and destruction it brought to people in many corners of the world. We should also remember that the United Nations was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. In the course of the 70 years that have passed since the end of the Second World War, many instruments have been created to achieve that goal.

Unfortunately, we have not always been successful. The tragic Balkan War in the 1990s made us understand that Europe, despite its tragic past, was not yet free from the nightmare of war and bloodshed. In 2014, another dramatic conflict arose on our doorstep, and the United Nations has not found an adequate response to mitigate the situation. We face conflicts in many other corners of the world — in Africa, in the Middle East and elsewhere. We must be resolute and consistent in acting in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We owe it to those who lost their lives fighting for peace and a brighter future.

Ms. Burlacu (Romania): Romania aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Head of Delegation of the European Union. Acting in its national capacity, my delegation would also like to make some additional remarks.

The seventieth anniversary of the United Nations provides the opportunity — and obliges us — to reflect in depth on the past and future of our common action on the international scene. Indeed, it is important to pay tribute to all victims of the Second World War.

Back in 1945, Romania was the fourth largest contributor of manpower during the Second World War, after the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom. Accordingly, soon after the end of the War, the highest distinctions were awarded by both the Soviet Union and the United States to the King of Romania, Mihai I — who is still alive today — for his role in ending the confrontation. We are very proud of Romania's contribution to the final Allied victory in the Second World War.

At first, in 1941, Romania entered the war against the Soviet Union in order to recover its lost territorial integrity. But in August 1944, following the removal of the Antonescu regime, it switched sides and joined the Allied Powers in fighting Germany, in order to preserve its territorial integrity. Between August 1944 and May 1945, Romania engaged in battle over 275,000 troops, liberating many cities and villages also in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Austria, with the sacrifice of 170,000 dead and wounded.

The United Nations is an Organization born on the loss and suffering of millions of people and of their shared hope for a better future, in which human dignity and peace are the core values. Those ideals and the spirit that inspired the creation of the United Nations are still far from being transformed into reality. The

resurgence of conflicts in many parts of the world, especially during the past few years, most notably in the Middle East, the rise of non-State actors driven by extremist ideology are putting a heavy strain on the international security system.

While it is clear that the security landscape has fundamentally changed, it is important to stress that the core of our collective security system is the same. The obligation to refrain from the use of force in international relations is as valid today as it was in 1945. The necessity of common action is as valid today as it was 70 years ago, exponentially enhanced by the speed of interaction in a globalized world.

We need to be mindful that without addressing the root causes of conflicts — multifaceted, including economic, social and, last but not least, political aspects — the international community will not be able to attain a sustainable peace. Repeated crises have shown that pre-emptive interventions are not sufficient and must be integrated into a complex set of actions for the long term. Our vision on the preconditions for a sustainable peace was articulated a long time ago by the distinguished Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu, who served twice as President of the League of Nations. His reflections are still valid today:

> "First of all, winners in war must forget their hatred and understand that all are suffering because of war ... Then, there is a need for all peoples to blend together, to see each other, to talk to each other, to discuss face to face about their common interests."

Referring to causes that provoke and amplify international tensions, Titulescu advocated that the world needs to revise not treaties but its own mindset. In this context — and bearing in mind the nature of today's threats — a very strong emphasis must be placed on education, especially in post-conflict or, as is more often the case now, in areas liberated from terrorism, in order to prevent new atrocities in the future and allow social recovery. The United Nations and its various bodies have an important role to play in the application of all these concepts. The participation of women is also a key to ending conflicts and building development.

After 60 years of United Nations membership, Romania continues to advocate a vision of sustainable peace based on a shared sense of security, achieving stability while building mutual trust and knowledge between nations, including a careful analysis of divergences and identifying ways to address them. The accepted means for solving conflicts must be only political and legal. The spirit of human solidarity must prevail over military strength. This conviction became embedded in Romania's foreign policy, and promoting the rule of law in international relations has been a constant line of action for Romanian foreign policy.

Commemorations such as this one are times of reflections on lessons learned, especially the painful ones. A special consideration should be kept in mind as regards the Holocaust; we remain engaged in honouring the memory of its victims and strongly condemn any attempts to distort or deny it, as well as in combating anti-Semitism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Also on lessons learned, Romania prides itself on its policy of inclusiveness.

To conclude, let us reflect upon the words of the second Secretary-General, the lamented Dag Hammarskjöld: "The United Nations was not created to take humankind to heaven, but to save it from hell". We should all acknowledge the immense work done by the United Nations since its creation, as well as the immense tasks that remain in front of us. The best way that we the United Nations, together, can honour the victims is to act with determination to achieve progress towards the ideals for which millions of people gave their lives.

Ms. Power (United States of America): Seventy years ago today — on 5 May 1945 — soldiers from the United States Army 11th Armored Division liberated the Nazi concentration camp at Mauthausen. It is estimated that nearly 200,000 prisoners had passed through Mauthausen's gates since 1938 — including Jews, Roma, Spanish Republicans, communists, and members of the international brigades from Czechoslovakia, Poland and other countries. Around half of the prisoners — 100,000 men, women, and children — were shot, hanged, tortured, starved to death or gassed in a chamber disguised to look like a communal shower. On the door of the chamber was a small window, through which visiting Nazi officials came to watch the gassing.

The SS accelerated their killing as the liberators approached. On 20 April, 3,000 prisoners from Mauthausen's infirmary were marked for death. The camp's gas chamber was used for the last time on 28 April. The American soldiers found the last victims in the chamber with their clothes on; the executioners,

it seemed, had little reason to pretend anymore that the chamber was a shower.

Of course, the horrors of the Second World War took many forms beyond concentration camps. Tatyana Savicheva was just 11 years old when the siege of Leningrad began. Living with her mother and three siblings, she kept a journal of her experiences, which she eventually burned for warmth. But she held onto a small diary, whose sole entries read as follows:

> "Zhenya died on 28 December at 12 p.m. 1941. Grandma died on 25 January at 3 p.m. 1942. Leka died on 17 March at 5 a.m. 1942. Uncle Vasya died on 13 April at 2 o'clock after midnight 1942. Uncle Lesha died on 10 May at 4 p.m. 1942. Mother died on 13 May at 7.30 a.m. 1942. Savichevs died. Everyone died. Only Tanya is left."

Tatyana's relatives were among some 800,000 Russians who starved to death during the siege of Leningrad — 800,000. Tatyana was rescued in 1942, but her health never recovered. She died as well, on 1 July 1944. She was 14. Today, as we gather to mark the end of the Second World War, the scale of the loss is as incomprehensible as ever. And the details continue to haunt us. Consider that, for every resident of Dresden, there were 42.8 cubic metres of rubble. Or consider the "disquieting smells" that emerged from basements and rubble when temperatures rose from winter to spring in Warsaw — a time when, one reporter wrote, "no one ... has the consolation of thinking that all of Warsaw's quarter-million dead were properly buried".

As we pay tribute to the tens of millions of people who died in the war, including more than 400,000 Americans — we must remember why they gave their lives. We must remember why the Allies fought their way to liberate death camps like Mauthausen; and why children like 11-year-old Tatyana helped dig trenches to defend their besieged city of Leningrad. They fought because, as Winston Churchill so eloquently put it in September 1939, shortly after the Nazis invaded Poland:

> "This is not a question of fighting for Danzig ... We are fighting to save the whole world from the pestilence of Nazi tyranny and in defense of all that is most sacred to man ... It is a war ... to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man."

Through countless acts of bravery and sacrifice — some documented, most that we will never know — they succeeded in defending and eventually reviving the stature of men and women.

They are the reason we are here today and why the United Nations exists. The idea of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights confirmed, is one of the impregnable rocks upon which our global order is anchored, as is the system of international justice that today is helping us hold warlords and dictators accountable, which was first conceived of at Nuremberg.

But if we are truly to honour their sacrifice, we must do more than memorialize; we must constantly ask ourselves whether we are doing enough to defend the principles they fought for; enough to ensure the rights that they affirmed do not exist only on paper. Those principles are ridiculed by Governments that gas and barrel-bomb their own people and use starvation as a weapon of war, as the Al-Assad regime continues to do. And they are weakened by regimes that hold 100,000 of their citizens in prison camps, working them to death and forcing children to watch their parents' executions, as is happening today in North Korea.

Millions of people gave up their lives because they believed our world had no place for crimes like these. We are in awe of their sacrifice and we owe it to them, to ourselves and to future generations to live up to the principles that they fought for.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation welcomes the convening of this special meeting of the General Assembly commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the victory in the world war against fascism. On this important occasion, we profoundly remember the innocent victims of the war and pay the highest tribute to the brave martyrs who sacrificed their valuable lives to victory of the world over fascism and to world peace, civilization and human progress.

The Second World War was a dark page in human history. As pointed out in General Assembly resolution 69/267, of February 2015, the Second World War brought untold suffering to Asia, Europe, Africa, the Pacific and other places in the world. The war wrought unprecedented havoc on human civilization. Meanwhile, the Second World War was also a great war in human history, in which justice defeated evil, light defeated darkness, and the progressive defeated the reactionary. All of the peace-loving nations formed a

global anti-fascist coalition which, through painstaking and heroic fighting, claimed victory in the war against fascism, with far-reaching and profound consequences for human civilization and progress.

In commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the victory in the global war against fascism and the establishment of the United Nations, the international community will hold a series of commemorative activities. The Chinese Government will hold elaborate activities in commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the Chinese people's war of resistance against Japan and the world war against fascism.

The Chinese war against Japan was part of the world's anti-fascist war. As the main battlefield in the East of the world's fight against fascism, the war in China broke out the earliest and lasted the longest, and in the process the Chinese people made a huge national sacrifice: according to the incomplete statistics, the death toll among the Chinese people, including military and civilians, totaled more than 35 million. In 1937 values, the direct economic loss totalled more than $100 billion and indirect totalled $500 billion.

China's war of resistance against Japan collaborated with and supported the war efforts of the Allied Powers on the European and Pacific battlefields. Therefore, they were of great strategic significance. In the process of China's war of resistance against Japan, the world Allied Powers — the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and France and the anti-fascist coalition — provided valuable material and human support to the Chinese people. The anti-fascist fighters in Korea, Viet Nam, Canada, India, New Zealand, Poland, Denmark and even Germany, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria and Japan participated directly in China's war of resistance against Japan. The Chinese people will never forget the countries and international friends who contributed morally and materially to the Chinese people's war of resistance against Japan. We will never forget the foreign friends who provided support to Chinese refugees following the massacre of Nanjing and other tragedies. We will never forget the voluntary martyrs from various countries who gave their lives on the Chinese battlefield.

The victory in the world war against fascism was won through the major sacrifice made by the people of the world, including the people of China. This war should serve as an important lesson to the people of the world that the past should be remembered, not forgotten, as a guide for the future. History should not be forgotten; to forget history is tantamount to betrayal. Any words and deeds that try to water down, negate or glorify the history of aggression will not be tolerated by any people or country, including those victimized during the Second World War. The international community must be vigilant against such words and deeds. We emphasize that history should not perpetuate hate but call on people to respect and preserve peace. Only by remembering the pains of the War can we see the value of peace; only by remembering history can we save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Over the past 70 years, the world has undergone profound changes. History has changed the face of humankind; peace, development cooperation and a win-win era have opened before us. The configuration of international forces favours peace and development. More favourable conditions have been put in place for overall stability in the international situation and for the promotion of joint development. China is ready to work with the wider membership of the United Nations to take stock of the overall world situation, follow the general trends of the time and stick to principles of mutual respect and equality, joint development with a cooperative approach for a win-win situation, a joint, integrated, cooperative and sustainable security doctrine, and cultural tolerance, inclusivity, exchanges and cross-pollination, with a view to forging together a new type of international relations with the all-win principle at its core so as to promote the joint future of humanity and better to serve the people.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Seventy years ago, on 25 April 1945, two weeks before the signing of the Karlshorst act on the unconditional surrender of the fascist regime and the end of the War in Europe, two events took place almost simultaneously in far-flung corners of the world whose deeper implications have, unfortunately, not been fully understood or recognized even today.

On that spring day, not far from the city of Torgau, on the Elbe, Red Army troops met United States troops. As a result of that meeting, which has become a symbol of the Allies' brotherhood in arms, what remained of the armed forces of the Nazi regime was divided into two parts. That same day, thousands of kilometres from war-ravaged Europe, in San Francisco, the representatives of 50 countries, including Belarus, gathered at the conference that laid the foundations for the United Nations. Through Heaven's will, the spirit of Elbe and

the spirit of the United Nations were born and came together on one and the same day. Those two events were the harbingers of a new hope for humankind.

Unfortunately, those events did not mark the advent of an era of cooperation and trust. The Cold War and the Iron Curtain not only divided the European continent but for long decades defined the logic of confrontation and mutual deterrence as the prevailing imperative of world policy, an imperative that did not, however, prevent either the fall of the Iron Curtain or the end of the Cold War.

Today we believe that the so-called zero-sum game is the only possible way for human society to exist, and that the domination and oppression of the weak and the silencing of dissenting voices by the strong is a natural driving force of history.

In recent decades, we have heard more sceptical voices questioning why today's world needs to remember the lessons of the Second World War. Yes, it was a tragedy, yes, the victims suffered, but the world has changed over the decades and has moved ahead in its development. Is not it time to turn the page of history and to stop being shackled by antiquated ideas?

No, it is not time, and it will never be time, because the last day of humankind's living memory of that global catastrophe will be the first day of what will truly be the last world war. In a world filled with nuclear weapons, it cannot be otherwise.

So why do we need this living memory of the War? Why do we need to know that for the hundreds of millions of people who had settled and currently live in the territory of the former Soviet Union, the abbreviation "SS" will never be associated with anything but cruelty, genocide and death?

Why it is offensive not to realize the real contribution of the Soviet Union to victory over fascism or at least recognize whose side the Red Army fought on in that War?

Why do people the world over need to know about Khatyn and Trostenets, Oradour and Babi Yar, Auschwitz and Lidice? Why do they need to know about the circumstances and the history of those tragedies, which have left such scars on the heart of humankind?

This knowledge and memory is not only our moral human debt to the tens of millions of victims of the War and to those who found the strength and courage to resist the Nazis; it is also part of a sense of gratitude and respect for the heroism of those who gave their lives to stop the establishment of a new world order based on racial hatred, militant nationalism and intolerance.

As a poet once rightly said, "It is not the dead who need it, but the living, too".

We must remember the lessons of the Second World War for the sake of our own future. Those who forget the lessons of history are condemned to repeat it.

As long as States seriously consider strategies based on the right of chosen nations to global or regional domination and to transform the environment according to their own subjective ideals; and as long as calls for the recognition of diversity and of ways forward towards the progressive development of human society remain just voices crying in the wilderness, then an understanding of the fragility of our social world and of the unpredictability of any violent transformation of society will not be possible. As long as restraint, willingness to listen, tolerance and compassion continue to be considered in international politics as signs of weakness and the threat of force, pressure, blackmail and sanctions all are praised; and as long as political and military strategies that contemplate the use of nuclear weapons exist, we cannot and have no right to believe that the lessons of the Second World War have been properly understood.

Coming into the General Assembly Hall today, participants may have seen on the first floor the main stand of the photo exhibit organized by eight fraternal countries in the memory of the heroes and victims of the Second World War. The name of the exhibit, "The Last World War: Remembering for Peace", reflects not just a naïve hope or a purely artistic approach; it represents suffering and a message to all States Members of the United Nations that through their practical actions, openness and movement towards one another, including in the United Nations, and making use of the specific opportunities presented by the United Nations summit to be held in September, the original spirit of the United Nations and of Elbe can be revived.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): This weekend, countries across the world will pause and mourn the millions of innocent men, women and children who lost their lives in the Second World War. Whatever flag they followed, whether civilian or soldier, we will remember them.

In our remembrance, we will also celebrate the heroism and extraordinary courage of our veterans who

liberated Europe and brought to an end nearly six years of conflict. In the United Kingdom, church bells will ring and beacons will be lit in celebration, just as they were seven decades ago.

We will never forget the sacrifice and service of our men and women who helped defeat fascism. Nor will we forget the bravery of our allies, including 8 million Commonwealth citizens, who fought by our side.

In this seventieth-anniversary year of the United Nations, let us never forget the very first line in our United Nations Charter: our pledge to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

The Second World War showed us the darkest side of humankind. It redefined our understanding of anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance. Many perpetrators of these horrific crimes are still being brought to justice today. Yet from the ashes of the conflict arose an Organization dedicated to promoting the best of humankind — one committed to fundamental human rights, to the dignity and equality of men and women, and to preserving international peace and security. When we hear the words of the Charter of the United Nations, let us all remember the price the world paid to agree those shared values. Recalling that terrible cost today must give us added impetus to protect and preserve our values from the threats they face.

Winston Churchill said that the statesman who resorted to conflict was no longer the master of policy, but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events. We have seen such events arise in previously unimaginable ways through the brutality of Al-Assad and the emergence of groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Indeed, it is sad to reflect that the regime's air attacks against the Syrian people have now gone on longer than the London Blitz of the Second World War.

Amid these new threats to international peace and security, challenges to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States continue as they did 70 years ago. We should all welcome the peace and prosperity that the European Union has helped foster over past decades. But we must also recognize that on its borders a flagrant disregard for sovereignty persists, one that has brought violence and instability to the wider European region.

As Members of the United Nations, it is incumbent upon us all to live up to the values of the United Nations Charter. There have been times over the past 70 years whn all Members have failed to do so. As we commemorate those who gave their lives in the Second World War, we should draw on the strength, determination and unity of purpose that they showed to bring liberty to Europe. In doing so, let us ensure that the United Nations remains a fitting legacy to their sacrifice.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): Today we are celebrating a key landmark in modern history: the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. I congratulate all representatives on the seventieth anniversary of our victory over fascism. Today we remember and pay tribute to how determination and courage can triumph in the face of the greatest of odds. That victory symbolizes our collective unity in the pursuit of peace over the forces of conflict and hostility. That shared victory also represents the highest principles of equality and harmony over intolerance, discrimination and genocide. Those values served to strongly unite the Soviet Union, the United States, China, Great Britain, France and many other countries that stood for truth and the unity of humankind.

That dark phase of history saw millions of people killed all over the world, including millions of civilians from more than 60 countries who were subject to horrific suffering, unjust trials, violence, humiliation and fear.

Some of the previous statements made by my colleagues moved me also to reflect a bit on the love story that took place in my own Abdrakhmanov family. It took place during the siege of Leningrad, which the American Ambassador mentioned. It was there, while defending one of the most beautiful cities in the world, that my uncle Esmurat, an officer in the Soviet Army, met a Russian woman no less beautiful by the equally lovely name of Anastasia. They served together in the army, married and were eventually demobilized from the Red Army. They then returned to Kazakhstan, where they lived happily beginning in the 1940s with their three daughters in a big family. They left Kazakhstan in the mid-1990s for family reasons, and they now rest in peace in the Russian city of Kaliningrad, on the Baltic Sea.

My uncle's older brother — my father, Kudaigbergen — served in the Red Army from 1939 to 1946. He survived. But while we honour him and the other soldiers who fought valiantly on the battlefield, today we also grieve and honour the memory of all those who gave their lives, dying as prisoners in concentration camps or as collateral victims, including

martyred women, children and the elderly. By the end of the War, more than 20 million people of the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Soviet society had been killed. Of Kazakhstan's 6.2 million citizens, approximately 1.7 million — or 27 per cent of the population — also fought in the battle against fascism. Forty-four per cent of them were killed, which amounts to more than 600,000 people.

Wars are not only fought on the front lines and trenches; millions of people also supported the war effort behind the scenes just as heroically as our soldiers. We are deeply grateful to those — the elderly, women and children — who supported from the home front those who were falling from fatigue and exhaustion. According to statistics, for every soldier on the war front, five to eight people worked as unsung and unknown heroes. More than 700,000 Kazakhstan citizens made up regiments during the War, which required labour-intensive efforts. In other words, one out of every four citizens of my republic contributed to building defence installations or worked in war-related factories and power plants.

I present those statistics not to make a dramatic statement to impress the Assembly, but rather to draw attention to our common history and to build understanding among us all. All countries throughout the world that were impacted by the Second World War suffered irreparable losses, with grief inflicted upon every family. Those scars and wounds persist today through the loss of millions of loved ones, who are deeply mourned. The sacrifices of our men and women call for our highest tribute to them. They serve as inspiration to future generations to go forth on the path of peace. Their tragedies are a solemn reminder that the aiding or abetting of violence, or even indifference, can inevitably lead to unspeakable and horrifying tragedies of a global scale. That is not the path we should take in the twenty-first century, despite the real threats that we face today. This experience should lead us to avoid a repetition of the Cold War — or the raging conflicts we see around the world.

We need to pursue and defend a world order based on security and justice. That is what in the United Nations we call the new post-2015 agenda of social transformation, with an overarching culture of peace and with new forms of bilateral and multilateral relations.

I again congratulate all representatives on the anniversary of this great victory.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): Before I begin, I want to thank Ambassador Dapkiunas and the Government of Belarus for the special tree-planting ceremony that took place earlier.

Seventy-five years ago, at the dawn of the Second World War, Europe was locked in the grip of tyranny. Hitler's Reich had already conquered huge swaths of Europe, and the shadow of oppression grew day by day as the Nazis subjugated, devastated and exterminated anyone they deemed different and inferior. With the armies of fascism advancing, the Allied forces knew they had no choice but to liberate Europe from the grip of tyranny. History and circumstance called for bravery, and a generation of men and women answered the call.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, they fought on the beaches, they fought on the landing grounds, they fought in the fields and in the streets, they fought in the hills; they never surrendered. We owe our freedom to the courage and determination of the Allied armies — the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, Canada, France and other countries — that fought to restore freedom to Europe. The nations that joined together to defeat the Nazis did not always agree, but despite their political differences, they knew that evil had to be stopped.

The losses were immense — the Russians alone lost over 20 million people. It was a terrible price to pay. They stood up to the forces of nature, they stood up to the Nazis' evil human nature. The people of Israel will never forget the bravery of and the sacrifices made by the Russian people.

Today we honour all those who made victory possible. Some of those people — the veterans — are with us today. We also mourn the tens of millions of victims of history's darkest hours.

For Israel and the Jewish people, the Second World War is synonymous with the Holocaust. Families were torn apart, vibrant communities destroyed, and one third of the Jewish people — including 1 million children — were murdered. We are still haunted by the devastation. The numbers tattooed on the arms of our parents and grandparents are an enduring reminder of the horrors they suffered, of a time when a person was a number rather than someone's father or brother or son.

The passage of time now threaten to cloud the world's memory. With every passing year, the number of survivors, veterans and witnesses left to recount their first-hand experiences diminishes. Therefore, the

responsibility falls to us to ensure that the lessons of history are passed on to future generations.

Freedom is once again under attack. The radical Islamists marching across the Middle East and North Africa are every bit as determined and dangerous as the Nazi forces that marched across Europe.

Seventy-five years ago, men, women and children were rounded up and murdered because of what they believed, where they came from, how they looked and whom they loved. The same crimes are taking place in the Middle East. Activists and political opponents are being silenced, homosexuals are being hanged and Christians are being beheaded.

Make no mistake, evil is alive and well — and not just in the Middle East. In the heart of civilized Europe, angry mobs can be heard chanting "Gas the Jews," firebombs have been thrown at synagogues, young men are afraid to walk down the street wearing a kippah, and a kosher grocery store is targeted for attack.

The writing is on the wall. Former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin once said, "If an enemy says he seeks to destroy us, believe him. Don't doubt him for a moment."

History has taught us that Jewish lives can never be entrusted to another people or another nation. We must always be able to defend ourselves by ourselves. The State of Israel is the fulfilment of that promise. Never again. Never again will Jews be rounded up like cattle and marched to their death. Never again will the world think that Jews can be targeted with impunity.

We know the evil that man is capable of, and we know that some things are worth fighting for. Freedom is worth fighting for. Equality is worth fighting for. Democracy is worth fighting for.

Seventy years ago, a generation of men and women sacrificed in war so that we could inherit freedom, equality and democracy. We cannot allow those sacrifices to be made in vain. With courage and conviction, we must now fight for the ideals for which they lived and died.

General Douglas MacArthur once said:

> "We have known the bitterness of defeat and the exaltation of triumph, and from both we have learned there can be no turning back. We must go forward to preserve in peace what we won in war."

The time has come for us to be united in purpose, united in valour and united as nations, so that we too may pass on the gifts of freedom, equality and democracy to our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. Samvelian (Armenia): At today's solemn meeting, I represent a State whose people suffered one of the greatest losses during the Great Patriotic War and made a paramount contribution to achieving the great victory, a victory through enormous and heroic sacrifice. We believe it is our shared duty to carefully preserve its legacy and do all that we can for countries and peoples alike to draw lessons from the Second World War and prevent new threats.

At the beginning of the War, Armenia had a population of less than 1.5 million. While an estimated 500,000 Armenians served in the War, almost half of them sacrificed their lives for liberty. As one of the 15 republics of the Soviet Union, Armenia made its fair contribution during the War, helping to secure victory against Nazi Germany and its allies.

The years of war were a hard, heroic and gallant time in the life of the republic and the entire country. During the War, a large number of Armenian officers attained top positions in the Red Army command, including some 60 generals. Four of them would finish their military careers as marshals, the highest military rank of the Soviet Union. Those statistics make the Armenians, despite their relatively small number, the fourth most heavily represented ethnic group in the highest positions in the Soviet armed forces, behind only the Russians, the Ukrainians and Belarusians.

All together, some 70,000 Armenian soldiers received various medals and were decorated with awards for their bravery and service during the War. Armenian citizens were also active in the resistance groups, better known as the partisan movement, which operated behind the front lines, not only in Soviet territory but also in the other theatres of war, including in France, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Greece. Most of the Armenian partisans were former Soviet prisoners of war who had escaped their Nazi captors.

The vast majority of Armenians in the diaspora, themselves mostly survivors or descendants of survivors of the Armenian genocide, also supported the Allied war efforts. The Armenian community of the United States, numbering between 150,000 to 200,000 at the time, supplied more than 18,000 young men and

women to fight in the United States army. Thousands of Armenians fought under the French tricolour. Missak Manouchian, an Armenian resistance fighter, was captured and executed by the Nazis in 1944. Together with more than 20 members of his cell, he remains a much-respected figure in modern French history. Armenian communities in the Middle East and the West donated a considerable amount of money to the Soviet Government to help construct a series of tanks for the Red Army. Those tanks were named after David of Sassoun, the hero of an Armenian medieval epic, and General — later Marshal — Hovhannes Bagramyan, the highest-ranking Armenian officer in the Red Army at the time. The heroes of the Second World War remain dear to the hearts of Armenians. They saved the country and the peace.

In conclusion, it is critical to preserve and respect the memory of the victims of one of the darkest pages of our common history. In its preamble, the Charter of the United Nations states that we, the peoples of the United Nations, are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.

We must overcome the legacy of war, genocide and other crimes against humanity and build on the basis of cooperation and understanding in promoting democratic values and respecting fundamental freedoms. We urge the Members of the United Nations to recommit themselves to studying the lessons of the past and to adhere to the peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes around the world. That commitment is the best way to pay tribute to those who hve fought for liberty and freedom.

Mr. Braun (Germany): As we have heard repeatedly today, when the weapons fell silent in Europe in May 1945 — 70 years ago — the world lay in ruins. Europe was devastated. An entire continent was trapped between defeat and recommencement, victory and displacement, joy and desperation, independence and captivity, reconstruction and infinite exhaustion. A war unleashed by Nazi Germany had brought unspeakable suffering upon its neighbours and, as a consequence, also upon its own citizens. The name of my country will be linked to that human tragedy forever.

The United Nations was founded, 70 years ago, as a consequence of the Second World War. And it is in the halls of the United Nations that we Germans today are humbly bowing our heads to pay tribute to the millions of victims of the Second World War — men, women and children, soldiers and civilians alike, citizens of nearly all of the nations assembled here today — who lost their lives, their loved ones and their livelihoods in a senseless war. Germany is asking the nations for forgiveness, since we cannot forgive ourselves.

The crimes of the National Socialist regime are without parallel. To this day, they make us shudder: the murder of millions of Europe's Jews; the unspeakable crime that was the Shoah; the murder and persecution of Sinti and Roma, of homosexuals, of persons with disabilities, of political activists, of individuals who thought differently, looked differently, prayed differently or acted differently than what the National Socialists dictated. Germany has accepted its responsibility for those crimes, a responsibility that we will always honour.

"Memory has no expiration date, and you cannot decree that it has been dealt with or brought to a conclusion", said Noach Flug, who survived the death march from Auschwitz. This thought should always guide us, in Germany and elsewhere. It is our responsibility to keep the memory alive, as the number of survivors and witnesses is diminishing. We are thankful to the nations that liberated Germany from the inhumane National Socialist regime 70 years ago. I mention this because when the late German President Richard von Weizscker spoke of that liberation 30 years ago, he opened a new chapter for us Germans to come to terms with our past: not by suppressing the shameful memory, but by actively embracing our history. Only in that way could we build a new identity.

The year 1945 not only marks the end of the Second World War; it also commemorates the endeavour of visionary leaders to build a more peaceful and prosperous global order, to free humankind from the scourge of war and to replace the law of force with the force of law. To this day, the United Nations is the cornerstone of that vision. In that sense, 1945 also marked a new beginning. Who would have believed in May 1945 that France, Germany's archenemy for decades, would become our closest ally and friend? Who would have thought that Europe — the battlefield of the twentieth century — would overcome its divisions and develop into a prosperous and peaceful community, a promoter of global peace and security? Who would have thought that only 20 years after the Holocaust, Israel would reach out to Germany, the country of the perpetrators, to establish diplomatic relations? This year we are able to celebrate 50 years of

these diplomatic relations between Germany and Israel. Who would have thought that in 1973, two German States would be allowed to join the United Nations, to embrace, protect and promote the core principles enshrined in its Charter, values and principles that Nazi Germany abused so singularly? And who would have thought that Germany's reunification in 1990 would be supported by its former enemies?

While Europe and the world remained divided for decades after 1945, Germany was granted the opportunity to return to the international community to live in peace and friendship with its neighbours. The hand that those neighbours extended to us in peace laid the foundation for reconciliation and for ever-closer European integration. To this day, we are humbled and grateful for the forgiveness that we received.

Gratitude, however, is not enough. Reconciliation also entails a responsibility — a responsibility to strengthen and to defend international order in order to maintain international peace and security; a responsibility to stand in solidarity with those who are oppressed or persecuted; a responsibility to help overcome conflicts and divisions by peaceful means. Our post-War history has shown us that in our globalized world one can only gain by also giving. That realization lies at the heart of Germany's commitment to international institutions, European integration and worldwide partnerships. Therefore, when we join others in saying today "Never again!", we also mean "Never again act in isolation." Our "Never again!" will always include a firm commitment to the United Nations that rose from the ashes of the Second World War.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine) (*spoke in French*): It is with great deference that the international community, and especially Ukraine, is commemorating the great victory in the Second World War in these most memorable days. We remember all those who gave their lives for peace and security in Europe and the world over — for a world free of fascism and hate. In these days, our hearts are particularly filled with immense respect and deep gratitude for all those who sacrificed themselves for us, for our lives today and for our future. This is a particularly moving fact that unites all generations and fills us with shared feelings of joy and sadness alike.

We sincerely honour the memory of the liberators who victoriously defended our inalienable right to live freely in the land of our birth, and the memory of those in the anti-Hitler coalition that saved Europe from the bondage of fascism.

In these days of the month of May, all Ukrainian families remember those who did not return from that terrible and infernal War. Seventy years have passed since the day when the Ukrainian people — together with others — secured heroic victory in the Second World War. We continue every year, as we always shall, to remember the lessons of that tragic history, as we honour from the bottom of our hearts the memory of all those lost, and congratulate and thank those who preserve the memory of these tragic events.

Ukraine is and will forever remain extremely grateful to those who will remain forever young on the battlefields of the Second World War. My country paid an incredibly horrible price for the abolition of fascist dictatorship in Europe. Approximately 7 million Ukrainians participated in the hostilities on the various fronts of the Second World War, including 2,069 who were honoured during the War with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union — the highest Soviet distinction at the time. Among the 104 people twice named Hero of the Soviet Union, 29 were Ukrainians, or one in three. Among the three people on whom this highest distinction was conferred three times was our compatriot the legendary pilot Ivan Kozhedoub.

Honouring the memory of those who were lost is a great and sacred act because we realize that, without this great victory and the contribution of Ukraine to this very important achievement, there would be no free Europe.

The road to victory was hard and bloody. It was at the price of immense efforts that we were able to achieve it. According to war historians, Ukraine gave more than 8 million lives for the freedom of Europe. Let me underscore that, 8 million lives. The Soviet army lost nearly 3.5 million citizens of Ukraine. That is the catastrophic price that my country paid for the right to build our future free of the atrocities of fascism. More than 2 million Ukrainians were sent into forced labour in Germany — young people, adolescents and women. It was with the blood, sweat and tears of millions of our lost countrymen that Ukraine, like the whole of Europe, freed itself from fascism.

(*spoke in English*)

The great victory holiday is not only an opportunity to pay tribute to the fallen and to war veterans; it is

also an occasion to reflect on the lessons of the past, lessons that unfortunately have not all been learned. The spiritual emptiness, the loss of faith in the absolute value of human life and the individual ambitions of authoritarian leaders become the basis for political extremism, exporting new forms of artificial local conflicts, ethnic intolerance and radicalism. The loss of faith in the future, in civil solidarity and in love of one's neighbours, and morbid, selfish ambitions allow dictators and leaders to throw entire nations into a whirlpool of suffering.

Ukraine has travelled a long hard road. A year ago, we could confidently say that we had kept Ukraine united and diverse, a country that had restored its statehood and laid the foundation for its future among the developed European nations. However, unfortunately, some countries still cannot accept the fact that the past will remain forever in the past, that colonial empires went into the oblivion of history, that greatness is not built on armies of millions and on nuclear weapons but on stability, inspiring work and the prosperity of its citizens.

Seventy years on from the Second World War, Ukraine smells the odor of war again, sees its red color and hears the voice of those suffering from a conflict brought to us from the outside, but this time not from the West. It is now most tragic and incomprehensible to us that those with whom we fought together, side by side, against fascism, those whom we considered allies and friends, are today bringing chaos and death into our homes, and arming and financing bandits who cultivate terror in an area that was peaceful a year ago.

Those together with whom our grandfathers shed their blood in the battlefields against fascism in the last century are today in fact discrediting their blessed memory, stealing our internationally recognized territory, savagely ignoring the Charter of the United Nations, signed jointly 70 years ago, and repeating, step by step, the fatal errors that led to the outbreak of the Second World War, in 1939.

Ukraine is a European State that not only seeks to strengthen peace and security but also, as shown by its own historical examples, is committed to contributing to a world without war, human suffering and death. Today we call, from the rostrum of the United Nations on this memorable day, on those who, for their own geopolitical ambitions want to pollute the memory of millions who died in the Second World War, to come to their senses. Ukraine also appeals to the world not to turn a blind eye to attempts by some authoritarian leaders to ignite and sustain new seats of instability and bring all of us to the abyss of further world war, which may very well be the last.

Wars and civil conflicts destroy society and jeopardize the fate of millions of people. Let us care for the world, remember the past and work together to build our a better common future.

Mr. Bishnoi (India): The Second World War was the most devastating and destructive global conflict in human history. The world witnessed horrific bloodshed and violence, which led to the mass deaths of millions of civilians and soldiers. We need to remember the victims. We also need to pay tribute to the millions of soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice so that future generations might live in a safer world.

We are grateful to the President of the General Assembly for having convened this meeting to commemorate all of the victims of the War. We also thank the delegation of the Russian Federation for having piloted the resolution calling for this meeting. We salute the valiant young women and men and the people of all the countries who fought to ensure that we may live in a world free of fascism.

It is important to take note of and to remember the huge contributions and sacrifices made by people from all parts of the world.

The Indian Army suffered nearly 87,000 fatalities and more than 100,000 injured during the Second World War. At the start of Second World War, the Indian Army was a mere 200,000 men. That number swelled to 2.5 million men, the largest volunteer force ever raised in history. It participated in some of the most crucial battle fronts.

For millennia in India, it has been the philosophy of upholding the values of good over evil that has guided the code of the warrior. It is from that perspective that Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence, supported Indian participation in the two World Wars despite our then-ongoing struggle against colonial rule. Our participation contributed immensely to Allied efforts during the War.

I would particularly like to underline the sacrifices of brave Indian women, many of whom served as nurses in civil and military hospitals or as members of the Women's Auxiliary Corps, performing vital tasks for the war effort just behind the front lines. They drove

army vehicles, operated switchboards and worked as mechanics. During the evacuation of Myanmar, then called Burma, Indian women often stayed at their posts and continued to send vital messages over the telegraph lines, in order to help as many civilians as possible escape. Many died and many were captured, to endure terrible hardship and deprivation in prisoner-of-war camps.

As we mark the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, it is also an occasion to consider the lessons of the past and ways to meet the challenges of the future.

Despite the progress humankind has recorded, war is far from having been eliminated. While instances of war and armed conflict may have decreased over time, the actual impact on people has expanded. Estimates suggest that mortality caused by conflict has increased dramatically, from 1.6 million in the sixteenth century to nearly 110 million in the twentieth.

Today terrorism has emerged as one of the greatest threats to humankind. It threatens to expand its reach and engulf the world in carnage similar to that witnessed during the two World Wars. Terrorism is a global phenomenon and can be defeated only by global action. We need to ensure that we are not found wanting in our efforts.

As we commemorate the end of the Second World War, we also need to take stock of the health of the institutions of global governance that were established in its wake. President Museveni of Uganda, speaking at the United Nations yesterday, noted that most of the fundamental structures created after the Second World War by the victorious Powers remain unchanged. He pointed out that when the United Nations was created, there were only two sovereign countries in Africa. This meeting therefore also presents a useful opportunity to underline the need to address what President Museveni referred to as "the structural deficiency in the architecture of global security".

India participated in the San Francisco Conference and, as a founding Member of the United Nations, remains fully committed to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. It is our hope that the Organization will take concrete steps, as it celebrates its seventieth anniversary, to be fit for purpose and reflective of contemporary realities.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for having convened this special solemn meeting of the General Assembly.

Since this year marks the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which resulted in great sacrifices by mankind, I would like to pay most sincere tribute to all the victims who died as a result of the War.

As the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations stipulates, the United Nations was created 70 years ago in order "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind", and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and human dignity. It was also created in order "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained".

Throughout these 70 years, Japan has walked the path of a peace-loving nation while consistently respecting freedom, democracy, fundamental human rights and the rule of law, based on feelings of deep remorse over the war. Our actions brought suffering to the peoples in Asian countries. We must not avert our eyes from that fact.

Japan has also made assiduous efforts to contribute to world peace and prosperity through our efforts in areas such as the maintenance of peace and security, development and humanitarian assistance, the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as disarmament and non-proliferation. My delegation is making constructive contributions at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which has been taking place since last week here at the United Nations.

Japan attaches particular importance to the principle stipulated in the Charter that international disputes shall be settled by peaceful means based on international law, and not by force or coercion. We have been making great efforts to fully comply with international law, and we are proud of our record. Japan is committed to continuing our efforts to establish and universalize the rule of law.

Japan expresses its highest appreciation for the work of the United Nations in maintaining peace and security in the international community. At the same time, when we look at the world's current situation, 70 years after the Second World War, people are still

suffering from conflicts, poverty and human rights violations. Conflicts are not only among States but also among ethnicities and religions. Moreover, the world is facing unprecedented crises posed by the spread of extremism and terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This reminds us that there is an even greater need to be united in order to tackle the threats common to us all.

In view of these circumstances and as we head towards the future, the United Nations must continue to play a central role in the maintenance of international peace and security and in respecting and promoting human rights and freedom.

Freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law now constitute an inherent part of the identity of the Japanese people. The path we have taken so far as a peace-loving nation is the pride of the Japanese people and will never change, even as international circumstances change drastically.

I would like to end my statement by reaffirming Japan's determination to make further positive contributions, under the policy of a proactive contribution to peace, based on the principle of international cooperation, in areas such as peacebuilding, the fight against terrorism, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, human security, education, health, development, global warming and women's empowerment. We will make those contributions together with the United Nations.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The event to which today's meeting of the General Assembly is devoted is of truly historic significance. With losses on an unprecedented scale, the Second World War compelled all of civilized humankind to unite in a struggle against the mortal danger of the Nazi enslavement, putting aside all disputes and differences of opinion. The victory in that War was a shared victory that gave powerful impetus to the unification of the international community, the result of which was the creation of the United Nations Organization. Having paid a price of terrible suffering and the deaths of millions, the peoples of the world came to the realization that there was no alternative to the system of collective security enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Today, 70 years later, we must not forget that any attempts to infringe on the democratic rights of citizens as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights lead directly to tyranny, and from there it is only a step to the crimes that we recall today with horror and loathing. We reject all attempts to glorify fascism or rewrite history. It would be insane to allow ourselves to forget the terrible lessons of the Nazis' aggression and atrocities. We must always remember those who died, and join in the efforts of the international community to fight against new threats and challenges, recognizing and respecting the central role of the United Nations in that fight.

At a time when we are preparing to celebrate the anniversary of the victory over Nazism, we come back again and again to the pages of history that describe the most terrible and bloody war that our peoples have ever endured. The people of a great country had to save their homeland, their homes, their children. We were united in our desire, and we were victorious. We paid a very high price for that great victory: 20 million dead, including children. They did not all fall in battle; some died of hunger, of illness or in concentration camps. Millions of orphans, 19-year-old widows, invalids, ruined cities and broken lives were all that remained when the War was over. Together with representatives of other nationalities, the citizens of Turkmenistan fought courageously against fascism. Many of them took part in battles all over Europe, liberating city after city, country after country, and ending that long, arduous march at the walls of the Reichstag. Hundreds of thousands of them were left to lie for eternity in foreign soil, paying with their own lives to preserve peace for all. Their souls will live in our memory, and their deeds will never die.

It would be impossible to name in this meeting the thousands of brave soldiers who fought, whether or not they received medals and decorations. The same goes for the women and children who worked in factories and on farms to help those at the front. During the War the people of the Republic of Turkmenia gave seven and a half tons of silver and gold ornaments to help the war effort and sent millions of parcels of warm clothing as gifts to the soldiers and officers of the Red Army, making sacrifices in order to help build planes, tanks and other armaments. We pay tribute to all the peoples of the Soviet Union, who did everything possible to help defeat fascism. We pay tribute to our allies who fought against fascism and helped to achieve our shared victory.

Today's meeting is one of the most important events commemorating the seventieth anniversary of our great victory over fascism, to which my country made a significant contribution. On 22 November

2004, the General Assembly adopted resolution 59/26, which declares 8 and 9 May a time of remembrance and reconciliation, and proposing that those two days be observed annually in tribute to all victims of the Second World War. The historical significance of the victory in the Second World War is inseparable from the vital mission that the United Nations has fulfilled for the past 70 years. The very creation of this universal Organization was first and foremost the result of the Allied coalition and would have been unthinkable without that coalition's defeat of fascism. The United Nations was created for peace and peaceful development.

The historic date that this special meeting of the General Assembly commemorates is a tribute to the millions of victims of the Nazi regime that must never be forgotten, neither here nor anywhere else in the world. We remember all who paid for that victory with their lives. May their memory be eternal. We bow down to all who participated in the second and, we hope, the last world war, whose lessons oblige us to cherish peace, fight every kind of neo-Nazism, chauvinism, xenophobia and other manifestations that seek to destroy human honour, dignity and rights. Today we planted a tree of peace in a ceremony that has a deep philosophical meaning. Our duty, and the duty of the peoples of all the countries of the United Nations, is to grow peace, to help it take root in every country, not to allow new violence and new victims, to agree and to settle disputes peacefully. We hope that we have been heard, seen and understood by millions of people all over the world. We are mothers raising children for life, for building a new and glorious world, and we do not want our children to die on battlegrounds. We must have no more wars. I wish all those here a very happy Day of Victory.

Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba welcomes the commemoration of the victory over fascism and the end of the Second World War. We see that act of justice as giving us a day for reflection. Seventy years ago, humankind vanquished barbarism. The victory over fascism involved the sacrifice of the lives of millions of human beings.

Fascism is the most complete expression of reactionary bourgeois and imperialist thinking. That political phenomenon extracted a very high price from humankind. While at the time a number of countries were also assaulted by fascism and contributed to the successful outcome of the War, none made a greater contribution to the victory over fascism's attempt to achieve world domination than the peoples of the Soviet Union. Over four years of war, several of its major cities were besieged and destroyed. More than 20 million Soviet citizens lost their lives. Communists, Jews, Roma, the disabled and homosexuals — all were persecuted with the aim of extermination. We are eternally grateful to the countries and people who resisted, fought and defeated fascism.

At the end of the Second World War, the nations then free of colonialism and foreign domination formed the United Nations. In its founding Charter, the Organization set down commitments to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations, achieving international cooperation in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and ensuring respect for human rights without discrimination. Respect for sovereignty and equality among States, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the rejection of the use of force remain irreplaceable pillars of the international system.

However, the victory over fascism did not mean we had found a panacea for all. Many peoples had to wait years to achieve their independence and join the United Nations. The multipolarity that characterized the world for decades in the second half of the twentieth century allowed momentous achievements for developing countries, such as the adoption of declarations of peoples' right to self-determination, peace and development and the proclamation of such objectives as establishing a new international economic order and a new world order of information and communication.

Today, the United Nations faces colossal challenges and threats. Imperialist interventions against the sovereignty of States, the acceleration of climate change, underdevelopment and poverty, hunger and illiteracy, plundering wars for hegemonic domination, the challenge to the diversity and self-determination of peoples, and an unjust and unequal economic, commercial and financial international order that has been imposed on us are just some of the serious challenges we face. However, there is no greater danger to the human race than the existence of more than 16,000 nuclear weapons, 4,000 of which are ready for immediate use. No country or individual can feel safe on our planet until each and every one of these weapons is prohibited and consequently destroyed.

The United Nations has a sacred duty to reflect on the terrible lessons learned from the Second World War. We are called to work tirelessly to keep alive in the memory of present and future generations the consequences of intolerance, hegemonic projects and imperial greed. The victory over fascism confirmed the value of international solidarity and cooperation of all nations and all people who love freedom, peace and justice. We wish eternal glory to the heroes and martyrs of the struggle against fascism and militarism.

Mrs. Boura (Greece) (*spoke in French*): Greece aligns itself with the statement made by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

As the representative of Greece, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this solemn meeting of the Assembly to mark the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which was one of the bloodiest and destructive wars in modern human history.

(*spoke in English*)

The people of Greece — a country among those most severely afflicted by that War — remember with pride the role of their forefathers in the historic victory against inhumanity and tyranny. We are therefore proud to join other nations in paying tribute to the millions of men and women who fought and to all those who lost their lives defending freedom and universal values. In this context, we do not forget the tragedy and the victims of the Holocaust.

In 1940, Greece secured the first victory against fascism. In 1944, it was left a ruined country, a country in rubble and poverty, a State that had lost 10 per cent of its population. It lost 86 per cent of its Jewish communities. An estimated 250,000 people died of famine. Some 18 per cent of its population was left homeless. The country lost a third of its villages, half of its agricultural production and 40 per cent of its livestock, as well as a major part of its infrastructure and merchant marine. It was the vision of a better world that made us join in 1945 the 50 nations that established the United Nations, resolved to create a world where peace and reconciliation would prevail.

Just a few years after its end, the devastating World War brought about the biggest peace project in history, the creation of the former European communities, bringing former foes together in a single European family that Greece joined in the early 1980s. It is not by chance that in 2012 the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its role in the advancement of peace and reconciliation, human rights and democracy in Europe.

The year 2015 marks the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, as it was in 1945 that 51 States came together to endorse the United Nations Charter, vowing not to let this dark chapter of war repeat itself. However, we still live in an imperfect world — a world plagued by wars and conflicts, inequality and poverty, climate change and pandemic disease, destruction and terrorism. The challenges that we now face are different from those of 70 years ago. Many of them are on a global scale and can be successfully tackled only if we work closely, hand in hand, with perseverance and resolve. The lessons learned from the immense suffering, carnage and destruction caused by war should strengthen our commitment and efforts to ensure peace and security, support justice and human rights and promote progress and development.

Today, our much larger family of 193 countries should remain committed to carrying on the legacy of the past generations who fought valiantly and died for the freedom of many among us.

Mr. Mminele (South Africa): It is with great respect that I wish to pay sincere tribute and express my country's condolences to all the victims who perished as a result of the Second World War. This period was marred by continuous incidents of man's inhumanity to man. Millions of men, women and children died throughout the world due to the intolerance displayed by undemocratic and warmongering regimes, whose only concern was domination, expansion and the enslavement of entire countries and regions.

The lack of tolerance was made manifest in many malicious forms, be it an absence of political, ideological, racial, cultural or religious tolerance, or the growth of unchecked nationalism and imperialism that ultimately allowed unjust regimes to take action against the innocent and the defenceless. This was what allowed the Second World War to commence and ultimately claim millions of lives throughout the world, including on the continent of Africa.

Having been built from the ashes of this devastating War, the United Nations must continue to strive for the objective of preserving international peace and security. In its preamble, the Charter speaks of

> "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind ...".

We continue to remain conscious of the fact, however, that it is not just the two World Wars that have brought untold sorrow to humankind. We are also aware that our efforts for peace have failed too often. South Africa reiterates its undertaking to work with all the Members of the United Nations to eliminate the scourge of war as witnessed just 70 years ago. We remain committed to creating a more peaceful, just and prosperous world for future generations.

At the same time, we are regretfully aware of the many crises that remain unresolved. Therefore, this commemoration must sharpen our resolve and commitment to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or sovereignty of States. Also, it should lead us to redouble our efforts to settle disputes by peaceful means. We need to overcome the legacies of the War and build on the progress we have made since the end of the Second World War in promoting democratic values, human rights and fundamental freedoms. When it comes to commemoration, we should pay tribute to the victims of the Second World War. Their dreams of peace should inspire us to redouble our efforts in working for international peace and security.

As the world converges later in September to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, it will be crucial for all of us to stop and reflect on how far we have come. Let us use that moment to remember these fallen heroes and heroines. We should never lose sight of their sacrifices, which allowed for the entrenchment of the very principles and values which we hold dear and have defined the very foundations of the United Nations.

Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): We commend the Russian Federation for proposing this special solemn meeting of the General Assembly on the seventieth anniversary of victory in the Second World War. The heroic role played by the Russian people alongside many others in vanquishing fascism will never be forgotten. Today is a day of reverence and remembrance. Today, we honour the innumerable men and women across the globe who sacrificed their lives to defend liberty, eradicate intolerance and uphold justice. We also pay homage to the tens of millions of innocent civilians who perished in the largest conflict ever fought.

Let us not forget those war victims who were subject to horrific policies of extermination and genocide. Today, we renew our joint commitment never to allow those torments to ravage humanity again. Brazil is proud of its national contribution to the cause of the Allies during the conflict and in peacetime. Having declared war on the Axis and supplied key air and naval bases to Allied forces as of 1942, Brazil later dispatched its first fighter squadron and an expeditionary force of over 25,000 troops to Europe, having also joined in the anti-submarine combats in the Atlantic.

By fighting bravely in Monte Castello, Montese, Fornovo di Taro and other battles, our soldiers contributed to liberating Italy and to the overall victory over fascism. The Brazilian Government also took part in regional and global meetings that designed a new international order aimed at ensuring peace and cooperation, culminating in the San Francisco Conference, when my country became a founding Member of the Organization. One of the core purposes of the United Nations is to maintain peace and security through collective measures. The Charter also establishes that peaceful means shall be used to settle international disputes. These objectives remain as valid and vital today as they were seven decades ago.

Yet the world has undergone complex and profound changes since 1945. New challenges that could not have been anticipated by our forefathers in San Francisco have emerged and now threaten to render dysfunctional our multilateral system. In order to renew our commitment to the principles and purposes of the Organization, we should be as ambitious as the statesmen who once conceived of a new global order based on universal values.

At the heart of this endeavour is the imperative to update our framework for the maintenance of international peace and security. Let us seize the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations as an opportunity to achieve a concrete outcome on this decisive matter. Reforming the Security Council so that it is fit for the new challenges we confront would be the ultimate tribute paid by our generation to the millions of victims of the Second World War whose memory we cherish and honour today.

Mr. An Myong Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Today, the United Nations and its Member

States stand at a historic moment of looking at past, present and future. Seventy years ago, the heroic army and people of the Soviet Union defeated fascism and militarism, which had driven humankind into enormous suffering and death and made a great contribution to ending the Second World War. We highly appreciate the Russian Federation for having played a leading role in safeguarding world peace and security.

The nations and peoples of the world were firmly united by a strong determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of world wars, which twice imposed untold sorrow on humankind, and waged a hard struggle to achieve durable peace and security. Thanks to the persevering efforts of the peace-loving and progressive countries and peoples of the world after the end of the Second World War, much has been achieved in the struggle to safeguard world peace and security.

However, moves of domination, subjugation and interference designed to infringe upon the sovereignty and block the independent development of other countries and nations have been continuing non-stop, and world peace and security are still faced with lots of challenges. The Government and people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had to devote everything to ensuring peace and security on the Korean peninsula in light of the circumstances whereby the country and the nation are artificially divided, though liberated from the occupation by Japanese militarism and faced with constant aggression attempts and sanctions by outside forces. Today, the Korean peninsula remains one of the most dangerous hotspots, and ever-growing tensions in and around the peninsula have become a source of great concern around the world.

Extreme circumstances that do not leave any room for judgement as to when a war might break out continue to exist on the Korean peninsula due to the pursuit by the United States of a hostile policy and confrontational moves against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The United States resorts to nuclear war exercises for a surprise attack on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by mobilizing tens of thousands of military forces and nuclear attack equipment every year, as has already been the case two times this year.

Through its threats of military aggression and political and economic pressure against my country, the United States pursues the clear goals of disturbing our peaceful development and destroying the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and furthermore, of laying a springboard for achieving its strategy of world domination. Its Asian strategy is speedily carried out in the forms of, inter alia, introducing missile defence systems, trying to build a tripartite military alliance involving Japan and South Korea and increasing war exercises to intentionally create tensions on the Korean peninsula.

As we have stated several times, the nuclear threat posed by the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not potential or abstract, but practical and physical. Strategic nuclear bombers fly non-stop from the mainland or Guam to the Korean peninsula and stage drills simulating the dropping of nuclear bombs several times every year. Aircraft carriers and submarines loaded with nuclear missiles continually enter the waters around and in the Korean peninsula to take part in nuclear war exercises aimed at occupying Pyongyang.

The nuclear threat and blackmail and the hostile policy of the most powerful nuclear-weapon State for over half a century pushed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to acquire nuclear weapons. The ever-increasing nuclear threat leaves us with no other choice but to bolster our nuclear deterrent capabilities to cope with it. The fact that we are able to prevent war and defend peace on the Korean peninsula, where the interests of big Powers are intricately interwoven and war posturing runs high, is entirely attributable to our deterrent capabilities, including the nuclear forces built up by the Songun policy.

The scourge left by the Second World War in Asia remains present 70 years after the War. Japan, an enemy State and a defeated State that occupied Asian countries during the War and committed unimaginable crimes against humanity, has not yet acknowledged, issued an apology or made reparations for its crimes in a clearly convincing manner. The recent behaviour of the Japanese authorities evoke the serious concern of the international society. The fact that Japan is too ambitious and hot-tempered in its approach in the reform of the Security Council and also too fussy about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's human rights issue on the international arena is based on its sinister and impudent goal to bury its past crimes and eliminate the stigma of being an enemy State by all possible means. It is a challenge to history itself and to the United Nations; an act of twisting the knife in

the wounds of the victims of the massacre and forced labour and of the sex slaves killed by the Japanese army officers without even acknowledging their cruelty.

This year, which marks the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the defeat of Japan and the founding of the United Nations, Japan must make a political decision to separate itself from its past forever. Separating itself from its past should include totally extinguishing the ambition to revive the militarism that remains alive in the minds of the Japanese. That can no longer be left for future generations. We cannot equivocate about the past crimes of Japan, nor can those crimes be diluted or forgotten because of the passage of time. Japan's criminal history can never be covered up or erased.

In this solemn forum in which we are commemorating the victims of the Second World War, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea strongly urges Japan, in the name of all the victims of the massacres, the forced labour and the sex slaves killed by the Japanese army, to fully and clearly acknowledge, apologize for and make reparations for its crimes this year, which marks the seventieth anniversary of Japan's defeat.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this special meeting to commemorate all the victims of the Second World War 70 years after the War ended on the European continent. I also thank the Russian Federation for having taken the initiative to organize this commemorative meeting.

In 1945, the European continent was in ruins. Six years of war, destruction, killings, forced displacement and genocide had caused the loss of almost 20 million civilian lives on the European continent alone. That is more than the number of soldiers killed. This War against civilians culminated in the absolute horror of the Holocaust, the Nazi extermination directed against the Jews of Europe. We have gathered here today, first and foremost, to fulfil our eternal duty to remember all the victims of the War and its cruelty.

Our Organization, the United Nations, was born not only from the ruins of the Second World War, but also from the lessons of the failure of the collective security system of the period between the two Wars, and above all the failure of the League of Nations. The failures of the United Nations predecessor afford us at least four lessons.

First, it is not enough to address conflict from a strictly security standpoint. We must take into account the need to respect the dignity and worth of human beings, fundamental human rights and the development and assistance of populations. We know today that those factors play an essential role in addressing the root causes of conflict. In 1943, the Allied forces set up the United Nations Administration for Reconstruction and Relief, which assisted 30 million displaced persons in Europe and Asia. UNESCO, the International Labour Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations were established or at least conceived before the victory. Now, 70 years later, the United Nations has powerful levers to help the poor and marginalized, who constitute a breeding ground for all conflicts. These lessons must guide our work in defining the new post-2015 development agenda, which will have to meet the challenges faced by the developing world today.

The second lesson to be drawn is that our ability to act is linked to the legitimacy of our institutions. It bears repeating that 70 years after the establishment of the United Nations, our world is very different from the world of 1945. Therefore, the United Nations must adapt and reform to reflect the world we live in today. The reform of the Security Council in this regard is urgent and vital. France supports the enlargement of the Council in both categories of membership, permanent and non-permanent, and supports Germany and Japan, which deserve to be mentioned today, as well as India, Brazil and an African representation.

Legitimacy and credibility are key. That is the third lesson. What credibility does the Security Council have if it remains powerless in the face of the mass crimes being committed for four years in Syria? How can sovereignty be used as justification for inaction in the face of a conflict that has already resulted in the deaths of more than 200,000? On 26 June 1945, States Members of the United Nations met in San Francisco, signed the Charter and laid out in its preamble the powerful words that resonate still today:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person ..."

That defense of fundamental human rights is the reason for being for our Organization.

Those rights are solemnly laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was drafted by the French jurist René Cassin, together with nine counterparts from around the world. The Declaration reaffirms the intangibility and universality of human rights. It was in that context that France formulated its initiative proposing that the permanent members of the Security Council abstain voluntarily and collectively from having recourse to the veto in situations of mass crimes, crimes whose extent and gravity in Syria represent an insult to the victims of the Second World War, which we are commemorating today. We hope that the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations will enable us to make progress with that initiative.

Lastly, I would like to mention one final lesson that France holds very dear, which is that there can be no peace without justice. The fight against impunity for the most serious crimes, whether in Nuremberg in the past or today in The Hague, must remain at the core of our efforts to create a lasting peace and avoid a return to war. That demand for justice clearly applies to Syria, where those responsible for large-scale crimes should be prosecuted in the International Criminal Court.

I would like to end on a note of hope. Between 1870 and 1945, France and Germany confronted each other in three major wars, including two World Wars. Since then, the tireless efforts of leaders on both sides of the Rhine have outlined a path of true reconciliation. That Franco-German reconciliation has enabled the creation of the European Union, a historically unique experiment in integrating and building an area of peace, prosperity and democracy. Hereditary conflicts and predestined history do not exist. France and Germany's reconciliation and the building of the European Union are important lessons for our time and a powerful message of hope for the community of nations.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this solemn meeting to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and to pay tribute to all the victims of that tragic chapter in human history. We are honoured by the presence of a group of veterans of the War at this meeting and would like to thank them and all who fought against Nazism and fascism for their valour and sacrifice. Seventy years after the end of the Second World War, we should honour and remember the millions of human beings, dead, missing, wounded, displaced or tortured by the horrors of the War, the worst conflict the world has ever seen, in which men fought for their survival and for the right to life of future generations, against Nazism and fascism. We hope that it will be the last such war and that there will be no more wars between peoples.

As the Second World War ended, the United Nations arose, along with the commitment, enshrined in its Charter, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to take effective measures to promote peace and security, social development and human rights in a comprehensive and inclusive manner. From then on, war as a means of enforcement or settlement of differences was legally proscribed. Only full compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations can enable us to ensure peace and security around the world.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a land of peace. Two hundred years ago, our liberators drew their swords for the rights of our people and for the independence of six South American nations. We have never attacked another country. We practice tolerance, dialogue and inclusion in our commitment to peace, justice and understanding among nations. Seventy years after the end of the Second World War, however, we note with deep sorrow and concern the resurgence in vast areas of our planet of intolerant and aggressive ideologies, of fascism, extremism and hatred driven by religious, ethnic, political, national and historical motives. Such ideologies seek to inflame and justify war in order to support and impose a hegemonic global economic system that is unfair, predatory and unsustainable.

We regret that, sadly, these 70 years are still producing bloody, infamous wars that bring a heavy burden of tragedy to our human condition, as they have always done. The millions of men and women who have suffered and continue to suffer from the horrors of war are a challenge to the conscience of humankind. We therefore ask ourselves what ideology, what reasons, what perverse geopolitical and economic interests can sustain or justify the existence of vast military complexes with so many weapons, so much technology, so many resources and means ready to wipe human beings off the face of the earth?

A few days ago, we paid tribute to the victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which vaporized thousands of people in seconds and resulted in more than a quarter of a million victims within days, along with their terrible consequences over time. Today

we once again advocate for disarmament and reject the nuclear proliferation that on that infamous occasion made the world aware of the horror of nuclear war.

We have a moral and political responsibility to ensure that the grave harm done by the ideologies of death, fascism, hatred, violence and military and totalitarian logic cannot rise again today in forms that are more modern, sophisticated and dangerous, and far more effective in their dissemination and their criminal activities. The war that is raging in major regions of the world, the use of colonialism, interventionism and the promotion and financing of extremism and terrorism as tools to destabilize countries and wreak havoc for economic and geopolitical purposes — these things are living proof that we still have much to do at the international level to overcome such problems and achieve sustainable peace.

This is a clear and vivid reminder of a legal obligation we cannot ignore. We must work to ensure political independence, territorial integrity, the self-determination of peoples, sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, which are fundamental to the maintenance of global peace and security and to the promotion of social development and the fight against poverty as political banners that unite us, and to ensure that the Second World War will remain only a terrible memory that humankind will never repeat.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.